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Mr. *WOLCOMBE*'s
A S S I Z E
S E R M O N,

B E F O R E

Mr. Baron *BURT*,

A N D

Mr. Justice *ETRE*,

April the 6th, 1712.

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A
SERMON
PREACH'D at the
ASSIZES
HELD AT
EXON,

April the 6th 1712,

BEFORE
Mr. Baron BURY,
AND
Mr. Justice EYRE.

By ROBERT WOLCOMBE, M. A.
Rector of Whitstone in Devon. K

*Publish'd at the Request of the High-Sheriff, and the
Gentlemen of the Grand-Jury.*

EXON:

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TO
JOHN WOOLLCOMBE, *Esq;*
High-Sheriff of the County of DEVON,
AND TO THE
Gentlemen of the Grand-Jury,

John Kelland,
Henry Incledon,
Christopher Harris,
Arthur Culme,
John Fownes,
John Burrington,
Andrew Davy,
Arth. Champernoun,
Abraham Dennis,
William Cholwich,
Humphry Arscott,

William Bruton,
Arthur Kelly,
Samuel Cooke,
Adrian Sweet,
Robert Bluet,
John Upcot,
William Long,
John Burdon,
Roger Giffard,
Richard Dyer,

Esqs;

Esqs;

Gentlemen,

THis Discourse had not seen
the Light but in pure Obe-
dience to Your Commands. How-
ever, I hope, the good Design of it
will in some measure, atone for

*its Defects. Righteousness and
Peace are absolutely Necessary to
make us happy here and hereafter
And if any Thing I have offered
upon those Subjects, shall contri-
bute to those Grand Ends, next
to the Blessing of God, which
only can render it effectual, it must
be ascrib'd to the Regard You have
been pleas'd to shew to the hearty
Endeavours of,*

Gentlemen,

Your most Faithful,

and Humble Servant,

R. Wolcombe

18
JAMES III. the Last Verse.

*And the Fruit of Righteousness is sown in Peace
of them that make peace.*

IN this and the preceding Verse we have a Description of the *Wisdom which is from above*. In the former, the *Apostle* reckons up the Excellent Qualities of it ; *The Wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of Mercy and good Fruit, without Partiality, and without Hypocrisy.* This, I think, gives us as lovely an *Idea* of the Christian Religion, as can be represented : For, to be *pure in Heart and Life* ; of an amicable, candid and charitable Disposition ; *ready to forgive, and willing to communicate* ; and all this without the Prospect of any *Secular Advantage* ; without any *Fraud, or Design* ; without serving a *Party*, or One's own *Temporal Interest* by it ; without *Partiality*, and without *Hypocrisy* : This is a Character which many Persons are not willing to go to the *price* of ; but, I presume, all must love and admire. And because all Causes are most certainly known by their Effects, and the best Judgment we can make, whether the *Wisdom, which is from above* governs in a Person's Mind, is by the *Fruit* of his Life. the *Apostle* adds, that *the Fruit of Righteousness is sown in Peace of them that make Peace.*

From which words I will observe, that there are Three Things necessary to prove a Person under the Conduct of the *Wisdom which is from above.*

- I. That he bring forth *the Fruit of Righteousness*.
 II. That *the Fruit of his Righteousness* be sown in
Peace. And
 III. That he be *a Maker of Peace*.

I. First then, by *Righteousness* we are to understand the *whole compass* of our Duty, both with respect to God, our Neighbour and our Selves. And by the *Fruit of Righteousness*, those *Graces* and *Virtues* which shine forth in the Lives of those who are Christians indeed, whereby the *Glory of God* is advanc'd, the *true Interest* of Mankind promoted, and their own *Peace* and *Happiness* secur'd. And because all the main Ends and Designs of Wisdom are fully answer'd, by *bringing forth the Fruit of Righteousness*; therefore, the *Fear of God*, which is the *Root* from whence they spring, is often in the Scriptures call'd *WISDOM* it self. *The fear of the Lord that is Wisdom, and to depart from Evil is Understanding.*

There is an inseparable Connexion between Piety and Prudence; and every one is so far truly wise, as, by the *Fruit of his Righteousness*, he can prove himself to be sincerely good. That he doth the *Will of God* from the Heart; That he hath *respect unto all his Commandments*; and makes it the chief Concern of his Life to *keep a Conscience void of Offence, both towards God and towards Man*: Such *Integrity*, the *Fruit* of such an active and universal *Righteousness*, is the only true *Test* of a Man's *Wisdom*. From whence we cannot but see, what slender Claims a great Part of Mankind can lay in for it.

How many are there who set up for being Virtuous, only because they abstain from a Vice or two, to which they have little or no *Temptation*, and which may not well agree with their *Worldly Designs*? How many think themselves good, for no better Reason than this, that some People, in *their Opinion*, are *much worse* than themselves?

There

There are a sort of Men among us, who seem to discharge their whole Abhorrence of Sin against the single Vice of *Hypocrisy*; and vainly imagine, that if they are not chargeable with any *Flattery* or *Dissimulation*, that no other *Guilt* can possibly stick to them. These are they who count it not *Shame* to *Riot* in the *Day-time*, and cause the Voice of their Prophanations, of their Oaths and Curses, to be heard in the very *Streets*, and yet as *lewd* and as *abominable* in their *Doings* as such Persons are: There are few of them but will take it very much amiss, if they are not thought to be highly in the *Interest*, either of the *Church*, or *State*, or both. But how much either of them is beholding to such *Pillars* and *Patriots* as these are, we are inform'd from the Mouth of *Truth* it self, in the 4th Chap. of *Hosea*, 2d and 3d Ver. Where, notwithstanding the great Detestation some of your *Common Swearers* and *Libertines* will pretend they have of *Liars* and *Thieves*, of those who abuse *Religion* by *Hypocrisy*, or the *Publick* by *Fraud*, yet the *Prophet* assures us, that all join together to pull down the Judgments of God upon a *Church* and *Nation*. His Words are these: *By Swearing, and Lying, and Killing, and Stealing, and committing Adultery, they break out, and Blood toucheth Blood; for these things shall the Land mourn.*

'Tis unaccountable by what *Stratagems* the *Great Deceiver* of Mankind, can work up some Persons who are so notoriously *bad*, into so good an Opinion of themselves; when their *Vices* are so open and scandalous, so much within *sight* and *bearing* that they fall under the *Cognizance* of the *Civil Magistrate*, as well as the *Censures* of the *Church*.

There are others, who, if they do but refrain from the *beggarly Crimes* of *SWEARING* and *DRUNKENNESS*, Sins for which there's nothing to be said, and by which there's nothing to be gotten, will give themselves a much greater Liberty in other more *gainful Vices*, which may be better kept under covert; and what such People would pass upon the World for *Righteousness*

eousness, is nothing else but a *Dexterity* of covering some real *Vices* with *pretended Virtues*.

How artfully have some Persons cloak'd their *Covetousness* and *Ambition*, and kept their *Worldly Projects* and *Designs* out of sight, by pretending a mighty *Zeal* for some things that look another way? And are always full of *Scruples*; always *straining at Knats*, to make it look impossible that ever they should be able to *swallow a Camel*. How many are there who endeavour to conceal their *hard Dealing*, and to supply the defects of *Charity*, and *Common Honesty*, by making the greater Noise about *lesser Matters*? As if they thought it was *their Province* only to *talk*, and quarrel about *Religion*, and other Peoples *Business* to *practice* it.

'Tis evident from hence, that there are but *few* of any sort to be met with without some *Pretensions* to the *Fruit of Righteousness*; and that the Number of those whose *Pretensions* are *just* and *warrantable* is not very great. From whence we may infer, The *Necessity* that lies upon every Person to *prove his own Work*, that so he may have *Rejoicing in himself*, and not in another.

And 1st, with respect to the *Nature* of it, to be very well assur'd, that he doth not *put Evil for Good*, or *Good for Evil*: For, as discerning as the present Age pretends to be, this Caution will not seem unnecessary, when 'tis consider'd, what an *Ascendant great Examples, Custom*, and the *common Cry*, have gotten, not only upon the *Words* and *Actions* of Men, but even upon their *Judgment* too. It is too much within their Power to *suppress a Virtue* and to *set up a Vice*, and sometimes to make the *one* pass for the *other*. QUALITY & NUMBERS give a sort of *Authority* to Wickedness: They set the *Simier* above the *Shame*; and then the *Conscience* soon becomes *insensible* of the *Guilt*: For let a *Practice* never so *prophane, brutish, uncharitable, or disloyal*, but once grow *FASHIONABLE*, the *Terrour* and *Deformity* of it quickly wear out. 'Tis easily reconcil'd to the *Fancy*, and, what is worst of all, the *contrary Virtue* shall

shall be represented as something that's very odd and singular.

There is nothing more unconstant than the *Voice* of the *Populace*; nothing more apt to mislead us than the Applause of Men, nor any thing more deceitful than our own Hearts. So that what is *highly approv'd* by all these, may be an *Abomination in the sight of God*. We must therefore try the *Fruit of our Righteousness* by his infallible Word of Truth, which plainly distinguishes the PRECIOUS from the VILE, and is only able to make us *Wise unto Salvation*.

2dly, Great Regard ought to be had to our *Intentions*. Many very good *Expressions* have been vented for very ill *Purposes*, and the most sacred Duties of Religion prostituted to the vilest and basest Designs. Our Blessed Saviour charges the Scribes and Pharisees with *Fasting and Praying to be seen of Men*, and to devour *Widows Houses*. And St. Paul tells us, there were some who *preach'd Christ himself out of Strife and Contention*. We must therefore consider, that 'tis not enough for us to *speak* the Truth, but we must speak it from the Heart. Every good Word must have a good *Meaning*; and whatsoever we do, we must do it heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto Men, knowing that of the Lord we shall receive the Reward, for we serve the Lord Christ.

And to do this acceptably, 'tis not only required that we should bring forth good *Fruit*, good in its Kind and good in its *Intention*; but we must know further, that the Spirit of God lays also a very great Stress upon the manner of its Production. We have a strict Charge laid upon us, that all our Things should be done with *Charity*; we are to take Care that our Good be not evil spoken of. And I hope to make it very plain, by what I have further to offer upon this Argument, that none but the peaceable *Fruit of Righteousness* are by Jesus Christ unto the Praise and Glory of God. And this brings me to consider the Second thing necessary, to prove a Person under the Conduct of the *Wisdom which is from above*,

and that is, *That he sows the Fruit of his Righteousness in Peace.*

II. By *sowing the Fruit of Righteousness in Peace*, we are to understand, in general, the directing our *Words* and *Actions* to the Preservation, or procuring the Tranquillity and Repose, of others: When we carefully avoid every thing that may raise in them any *needless Fears*, or give 'em any *unnecessary Disquiet*. And the *Spirit of God* is pleas'd to make use of this Metaphor of *Sowing in Peace*, to assure us, that there is much more to be expected from such a *generous Regard* to the Ease and Advantage of *others*, than the *present* Pleasure and Satisfaction of it, though that be very great. That *Righteousness* thus *sown in Peace* will spring up into *everlasting Life*, and that nothing less than a *perfect State* of Bliss in *another World*, will be the Product of such a *pure and peaceable Behaviour* in *this*.

P E A C E then, as it stands in the Text, must be consider'd both as a *Duty* and as a *Blessing*; and under this View 'tis a *Demonstrative Argument*, how closely our *Obedience* and our *Interest* are twisted together: For the *Christian Law* commands a *peaceable Disposition*, and 'tis plain, both in Reason and Experience, that there is no being *wise* or *happy* without it.

But because there is nothing so good, or so necessary, but hath its Enemies and Opposers; and some of those who are *Enemies to Peace* have the Vanity to think themselves *Friends to Religion*: Because there are too many Persons every where to be met with who seem to make it *their greatest Pleasure* to *displease others*, and think it an *Incroachment* upon their *Christian Liberty* to be ty'd up to *Peace* and *Unity*; I will therefore lay before you *some* of those *many Obligations* we are all under to live in *Peace*.

Preach'd at EXON.

11

1. As *Private* Persons.

2. As we are subject to *Civil Government*, and link'd together in one *Society* and *Common Interest*.

3. As we are *Members* of the *Christian Church*, are admitted into the same *Covenant* by *One Baptism*, make profession of *One Faith*, and worship *One God* and *Common Father* of us all.

1. Then, if we consider our selves in a *private Capacity*, the *Wisdom* which is from above directs us to follow *PEACE with all Men*; To study the Things that make for Peace; And, if it be possible, as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all Men. From whence 'tis plain, that the *Gospel of Peace* will not allow any Person to proceed in *Rigour*, though it be for Recovery of *Right*, 'till he hath try'd all *fair Means*, and done as much as in him lies to procure an *amicable Accommodation*; and that nothing but *Necessity* can justify any sort of *Contention* between *Christians*.

2. Our Obligations to sow the *Fruit of our Righteousness in Peace* will rise higher, if we consider our selves as *Subjects*; because, the Evils consequent upon a Breach of Peace, as we stand thus related, are much more fatal and extensive. If one Man sin against another, the Judge shall judge him. There's some Satisfaction to be given for a *private Injury*, and some Reparation to be made to *Religion*, which suffers by all manner of *Strife*; but if a Man sin against the Lord, by openly assaulting, or secretly undermining, his *Ordinance of Government*: If by offering any *Violence* to the publick Peace, he endeavours to break in upon those *Fences* which God himself hath set up, for the *Protection* of the *Weak* and *Innocent*, and the *Terrour* of evil Doers: How daring are such Crimes in their Nature? How dreadful in their Consequences? And under what a Load of *Guilt* must those Persons lie, who

are answerable for all the Wickedness and Mischief of Confusion? So strictly are we oblig'd to preserve the Peace of Government as Men; and how much more as Christians! For the Gospel, not only affords us the clearest Light to guide our Feet into the Way of Peace, but also lays us under the highest Engagements to walk in it: It commands us to submit our selves to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's sake; and to render unto Caesar the Things that are Caesar's, from the same Principle of Conscience that we render unto God the Things that are God's; and to dispose us readily to submit our selves to one another in the fear of God. The Laws of Christ strike at the Roots of Pride and Revenge, the Common Disturbers of the Peace of Mankind, by obliging us to be cloth'd with Humility; to shew all Meekness unto all Men; to be slow to Wrath, ready to forgive, and above all things to put on Charity, which suffereth long and is kind, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Where these Precepts prevail, nothing that's Rebellious can thrive; and 'till a Person can break those Bands in sunder, and cast away those Cords from him, 'tis impossible for his Judgment to allow, or his Will to relish, any thing that's Factionous or Seditious.

And because the being held back from Revenge, and oblig'd to forgive, the two great Preservatives of Peace, run so much against the Grain of Corrupt Nature, our Blessed Saviour is pleas'd to add the force of his own Example to recommend them; For all the Violence that was offer'd him, he return'd none; when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffer'd, he threaten'd not; but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously.

And did not his Disciples walk by the same Rule? Did ever Persons suffer so much Evil, for doing so much good, and behave themselves so peaceably under it? Can the Peace of Civil Government, and particularly that by which they were so much persecuted, be better guarded by Conscience, than St. Paul hath done it, in the two first Verses of the 13th Chapter of his Epistle to the Ro-

mans? *Let every Soul be subject to the Higher Powers, for there is no Power but of God, the Powers that be are ordain'd of God; whosoever therefore resisteth the Power, resisteth the Ordinance of God; and they that resist, shall receive to themselves Damnation.* How careful is he to charge Titus, to put the Church of Crete in mind to be subject to *Principalities and Powers, and to obey Magistrates?* And exhorts Timothy, that *Prayers, Supplications, Intercessions and giving of Thanks, should be made for all Men, especially for Kings, and them that are set in Authority, that we may lead quiet and peaceable Lives, in all Godliness and Honesty.* I mention this Exhortation to Timothy, for the Reason annex'd to it; which, I think, is sufficient of it self, without the Assistance of any other Revelation, to give all Persons, who have a due Value for Religion, the Abhorrence of *Faction and Sedition*: For what *Worldly Advantages* soever some Turbulent Spirits may have made of such wicked Practices, *Godliness and Honesty* are always sure to be the greatest Sufferers by them. For when the *Reins of Government* are broken, and the *Lusts of Ambition, Covetousness, Envy and Revenge* are let loose, what Havock must they make of *Faith and a Good Conscience*; of every thing that is just and sacred? In short, we cannot be good *Christians* except we be good *Subjects*; he that will be pure, must be peaceable.

And our Obligations to live peaceably under that Government to which we are subject, not only for *Wrath*, but also for *Conscience sake*; not to resist its Authority, because it is of God, and for his Glory; always to prefer the publick Peace and Interest before any private Advantage; are the necessary Supports of all Government whatsoever. And these are no *Restraints* upon our Liberties, but upon our Lusts, and are design'd to withhold us from ruining our selves and others; which is evident from the Advice of Wisdom it self, *My Son, fear thou the Lord and the King, and meddle not with them that are given to change; for their Calamity cometh suddenly, and who knoweth the Ruin of them both?*

3. We are more especially oblig'd to *sow the Fruit of our Righteousness in Peace*, as we are *Members of the Church of Christ, Professors of the Gospel of Peace*, and *Subjects to Him who is the Prince of it*.

LOVE is the *Great Commandment*; the *Perfection and Fulfilling of the Christian Law*; the very *Essence of it* consisteth in *Union*: And PEACE is nothing else but that *Tranquillity* which results from it; that *serene State* which they enjoy who have nothing to fear from each other.

The *Peace and Prosperity of the Church of Christ*, are, by *his own Spirit*, compar'd to the *Health and Vigour of the Natural Body*, which we know are maintained by the good *Agreement of the Humours*, and a constant *Communication of Blood and Spirits thro' the whole*, whereby *that which every Part lacketh* is recruited by what all the rest supply, that *there might be no Schism in the Body*, but that the *Members might have the same Care one of another*. And thus it is in the *Mystical Body of Christ*; the *Members cannot edify one another in Faith and Love*, but by *Union and Communion*. There must be *one Common Interest*, and a *Sympathy in the whole Body*; if *one Member be honoured*, all must *rejoice with it*; and if *one Member suffer*, all the *Members must suffer with it*. Then is the *Church of Christ like a City*, that is at *Unity in its self*: The *Joy of its Friends*, and the *Terror of its Enemies*; for *God is in the midst of her*. When the *Members of a Church walk in Truth*, are of *one Mind* and live in *Peace*, the *God of Peace shall be with them*. In vain then do *Tyrants persecute their Persons*, and *Hereticks attack their Faith*; the *Lord of Host is with them*, the *God of Jacob is their Refuge*; and as long as they thus stand together, the *Gates of Hell shall not prevail against them*. But when the *Disturbance of a Church is from within*, and there's a *Schism in the Body*; when the *Bands of Charity* cannot hold the *Members together*, but instead of *striving together for the Hope of the Gospel*, against all the E-

nemies

enemies of their Salvation, they turn the Edge of their Zeal against their Brethren, *strive with them about Words and Things to no Profit*, wherein *nothing* necessary to Salvation (as themselves own) is concerned, and carry those *Unchristian* Contentions so far as to break *Communion*, and set up separate Interests; when by this Means those of the *Christian Faith* are become the greatest Enemies to *Christian Love*: Such a Disorder in the *Mystical Body of Christ*, can, I think, be represented by nothing better than a *Disease* in the *Natural Body*, which runs up into *Distraction*, sets the Patient a preying upon himself, and tearing out his Bowels with his own Hands.

This is the Bleeding Condition of *Religion*, when the *Unity of the Spirit* and the *Bonds of Peace* are broken, then *Words* and *Actions* are seldom under any Restraint; the *Tongue becomes an unruly Evil*, full of deadly *Poison*: And how insensibly doth the *Venome* diffuse it self thro' all the *Faculties* of the *Soul*? How soon is the *Understanding* darkned, the *Will* perverted, the *Passions* inflamed, and every thing ranckled into *Envy* and *Revenge*? And when People are thus blinded and sower'd, they are as ready to bite and devour one another, and in as much Danger of being devour'd one of another, as the *Great Enemy* of their *Peace* and *Happiness* can desire.

Besides, we shall find our selves most strictly oblig'd to sow the *Fruit of our Righteousness in Peace*, as we are *Members* of the *Church of Christ*, when we reflect upon the great *Encouragement* and *Advantage* which *Dissensions* among *Christians* give all the open and profess'd *Enemies* of *Christianity*.

We have a lively Image of this in any *Unnecessary Controversy* between two Brethren in *Civil Matters*: What a Breach doth it make, to let in all the *Enemies* of the *Family* to plunder and devour it? And we may often observe, that a Person who, before the Contention began, was an *acknowledg'd Adversary* to both the *Contending Parties*, by railing at him who suffers the *Wrong*, shall effectually recommend himself to him that hath done

done it, and so gain an Opportunity of ruining one Brother by the Assistance and to the Satisfaction of the other.

This fairly accounts for those open Assaults that have been lately made upon *Religion* and *Loyalty*: For it cannot be imagin'd, that any Persons would have dar'd to have written so prophanely of the *Ordinances of God*, or so slightly of *Allegiance* to his *Vicegerent*, if they had not presum'd to have found Shelter and Protection under our *Divisions*.

What an ill Influence *Divisions* have upon the *Christian Religion*, will further appear by that direct *Opposition* which they carry in their very *Nature* to the great Ends of *Christianity*.

All the gracious Designs of our *Redeemer* in all that he did and suffer'd for his *Church*, are contain'd in that *Prayer* which he offer'd to his *Father* for it, *That they All may be ONE, as thou O Father art in me and I in thee: And they also may be ONE in Us, that the World may believe that thou hast sent me*, John 17. 21. There's no *Precept*, or *Promise* of the Gospel, but what is included in our being united to God, and to one another: 'Tis the Perfection of *Grace* and *Glory*; And can there be any doubt, whether *Divisions* be a Contradiction to *Unity*? Or whether they be more consistent than *Light* and *Darkness*?

'Tis a trifling Evasion for those who break *Communion* with the *Establish'd Church*, which, on all sides, is allow'd to be a *SOUND PART* of the *Catholick*, to say, *That they are united to it by Charity*, when all the external Marks of *Disaffection* to its *Members*, and *Contempt* of its *Order* and *Government*, appear in their *Words* and *Actions*.

We cannot frame a Notion of a *Church* without supposing it to be a *Society*, and there can be no *Society* without *Order*, nor *Order* without *Government*; and 'tis plain from the 12th Chap. 1 Cor. Ver. 28. that *Governments* were as much ordain'd by *Christ* himself for the edifying of his *Church*, as *Prophets* and *Teachers*. And to
this

this End, he hath commanded us * to Obey them that have the Rule over us, and submit our selves; for they watch for our Souls, as they that must give an Account: That they may do it with Joy, and not with Grief; for that is unprofitable for us. Not to forsake the Assembling of our selves together, as the manner of some is. That we should all walk by the same Rule; and speak the same Things. And that we should follow after the Things that make for Peace, and Things whereby one may edify another.

These are Obligations which have a Divine Authority impress'd upon them; to which all Passion, Humour and Fancy must be submitted: And a conscientious Observation of those Duties for the Peace and Edification of the Church of God, is a proper Evidence, both of our Love to him and to one another; and proves, that it is not in Word and in Tongue only, but in Deed and in Truth. But for those who have no Regard to those necessary Means which God himself hath prescrib'd for the Preservation of Unity, to talk of an INWARD Love they bear to those, whom, without any just Cause, they Outwardly slight and avoid, is plainly to deceive themselves, as well as others.

The Great Author and Finisher of our Faith hath made Love the very Badge of our Profession; By this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye love one another: Which shews the Necessity of making it as publick as 'tis possible, and expressing it by all the most manifest and visible Tokens of it. The World cannot look into Hearts, but must judge of our Affections by our Actions; they therefore who fly from their Christian Brethren, as if they were Idolaters or Hereticks, for Things with which a little worldly Honour or Profit can prevail with them to comply, certainly take a very odd Course to make all Men know, that they heartily love them. What a lamentable Decay of Charity our unhappy Divisions have made among us, how closely 'tis confin'd, and how little of it deserves the Name of Christian, is too sensibly felt to need any further Proof:

And how much the *Cause* of *Christ* suffers by this, and how greatly the *Souls* of those are endanger'd who wander out of the *Paths* of *Love* and *Peace*, and are tossed to and fro, and carried about with every *Wind* of *Doctrine*, I am sure highly deserves to be laid to Heart.

And this lets us into the Reason of that Earnestness and Vehemency of Expression, with which *St. Paul* presses *Unity* and *Concord* upon his *Philippians*; there's scarce a Passage in the whole Bible that hath a more affectionate warmth in it: *If there be therefore any Consolation in Christ, if any Comfort of Love, if any Fellowship of the Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercies, fulfil ye my Joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same Love, being of one Accord, of one Mind*, Phil. 2. 1, 2.

And because the thinking too highly of themselves, and too meanly of others; the contracting their *Love* and *Esteem* to a *Sect* or *Party*, and then accounting all those as *Enemies* who are on the side of *Peace* and *Unity*; because this *Pride*, *Partiality* and *Prejudice* are those *Roots* of *Bitterness* from whence spring *Hatred*, *Variance*, *Emulation*, *Wrath*, *Strife*, such *Lusts* of the *Flesh* as ought not to be so much as once nam'd among those who are commanded to walk in the *Spirit*: the *Apostle* in the two next Verses gives it in charge to all the Members of the *Christian Church*, that nothing should be done by them thro' *Strife* or *Vainglory*; but that in lowliness of *Mind* each should esteem other better than themselves: That they should not look every *Man* on his own Things, but every *Man* also on the Things of others. And in the 14th and 15th Verses of the same Chapter, *Do all Things without Murmuring and Disputings, that ye may be Blameless and Harmless, the Sons of God without Rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse Generation, among whom ye shine as Lights in the World*.

If this most passionate Request of our *Apostle*, and those positive Commands of the *Spirit of God*, were but duly weigh'd and conscientiously practis'd, by those who talk so much of *Conscience*, there would be a speedy End put to all our uncharitable and unchristian Divisions.

ons: The *Substance* of Religion would never suffer so much for the decent Ceremonies of it: There would be no such Differences about Indifferent Things; and those who urge Conscience for their Separation, would find themselves under the strictest Ties of it, to restore the Peace and preserve the Unity of that Church, which enjoins no Unreasonable, and, by their own Confession, no Unlawful Terms of Communion. Which brings me to that which compleats the Character of one, that is under the Conduct of the Wisdom which is from above, and that is, that he be a *Maker of Peace*.

And this is a Work which every Christian is oblig'd to set his Heart to, and his Hand if he is capable: 'Tis a signal Instance of our Charity, and one of the best Proofs we can give of it. For, this is a *Business* that often crosses upon our Temporal Interest, and always upon our Ease; exposeth us to Censure and Slander, and very often to the Displeasure of those for whose Good it is design'd. But the Glory of God and the Good of Mankind are so nearly concern'd in it, the Commands of Christ and his Apostles are so express for it, and the great Designs of the Christian Religion are so highly and so directly promoted by it, that no Difficulties ought to discourage us. Especially if to this we add, that Glorious Title of Honour, which He, who is the very Fountain of it, hath conferr'd upon all those who are sincere in this truly Christian Undertaking; that they shall be called the Children of God: Blessed are the Peace-makers, for they shall be called the Children of God.

If the Peace of God rule in our Hearts, it will not only assuage any Swellings of our Pride and Passions, and thereby preserve us in the pleasant and peaceable Discharge of our whole Duty; but it will also engage us to commiserate those who want so Inestimable a Blessing: For, as Christians, we are call'd to Peace in One Body; which is the most endearing Consideration, and, if duly weigh'd, cannot but raise in us a holy Zeal for the Peace and Unity of this Church which is but One, in whose Prosperity and Adversity we must all share; and we

cannot behold this *Mystical Body of Christ* so *unnatural* rent by its own *Members*, and thereby made the *Scorn* and *Contempt* of the *Ungodly* and *Prophane*, without being very *sensibly* affected with it.

I will hope, that those who divide from us will not be *least* concern'd for that *great Scandal* which *Division* have brought upon the *Christian Religion*, but will thence infer the *Necessity of Unity*; and, instead of laying so much Stress upon a *Humane Indulgence*, which can make nothing good that is *evil in it self*, carefully examine into the Grounds of their *Separation*, and try whether hath any Warrant from the *Scriptures*, the only *infallible Guide*; and whether, among those so often repeated Commands for *Peace, Unity*, and *giving no Offence to the Church of God*, they can find one Text which will defend them in the keeping up a *Separation* from *Church*, with which they have broken *Communion* without any *justifiable Cause*; and seriously reflect, that the more inconsiderable those things are in which they differ from us, the more *unchristian* is their Contention about them. This, by the *Blessing of God*, may be an *effectual Means* to *unite us*, and make us, with *one Heart* and *one Mouth*, to glorify God, even the *Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

But he that would make an *impartial Enquiry* into things of this Nature, must not have *Mens Persons* in admiration, nor *lean upon his own Understanding*, but put himself under the *Conduct* of that *Wisdom which is from above*. He must arm himself against the mighty Force of *Prepossession* and *Partiality*, and consider with what great *Difficulty* we are brought to see and own a *darling and inveterate Error*, which is *deeply rooted* by being long *defended*; and that there is nothing to which a Person is more naturally *averse*, than the charging himself with any *Guilt or Folly*; for which reason, those things which are most *rashly* undertaken, are commonly the most *obstinately* persisted in.

When *Moses*, so remarkable for his *Meekness*, reproved his *Brethren that strove*, he that *did the wrong* thrust him

him from him, saying, *Who made thee a Prince and a Judge over us?* But let not such a Return of Evil for Good, or Hatred for Good-will, be any Discouragement to the *Ambassadors of the Prince of Peace*, when we appear in his Cause, and speak his Truth in Love, how ill soever it may be taken by those for whose Advantage it is intended. We must please Men no further than is consistent with their Good to Edification, if we resolve to be the *Servants of Christ*; and the greater Difficulties we discover in any thing that we undertake for his Glory, the more earnest must we be in our *Addresses* to him, to give us a proportionable Assistance.

And because 'tis a common *Artifice*, to evade the Force of Truth, by raising *Prejudices* against the Persons of them who assert it, all those who would give the best Evidence, that they sow the *Fruit of Righteousness in Peace*, by a sincere Endeavour to restore it where 'tis wanting, must by a good Conversation shew forth their Works with *Meekness of Wisdom*, that they may cut off all Occasion from those who seek Occasion to speak reproachfully; and the more narrowly their Steps are watch'd, the more carefully they must look to 'em.

To conclude, let us all therefore, by an *exemplary Piety*, by Love unfeign'd, and by our most fervent and constant Prayers, endeavour to engage the *Prince of Peace* himself, to take this great Work of healing our Breaches, and uniting us upon the sure Foundations of Truth, Righteousness and Peace into his own Hand; and let this be our Comfort, that he is able to soften the hardest Heart, to sweeten the most bitter and exasperated Spirit, and to open the most blind and prejudic'd Understanding, and to make us all to see, and to encline us all to follow, the great Things that belong to our Peace, before they be for ever hid from our Eyes.

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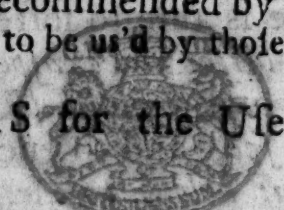
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